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ABSTRACT

Quality Education plays a key role in altering the oppressive conditions that affect blacks. The education of black people must, if it is to be education, promote the power, privilege and prestige of black people. Factors critical to the education of black children are testing; the curriculum, in particular the teaching of reading; teacher expectations and the allocation of social roles; and racial balance. Programs such as performance contracting, compensatory education or giving kids candy for the correct answer all suggest that the problem rests with the student. This educationist/psychologist perspective or blame the victim approach is in direct opposition to the more appropriate wholistic or systemic view of black education which takes the social structure rather than individuals as "the stuff" of its study. (Author/AM)

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QUALITY EDUCATION FOR BLACK CHILDREN IN "SEGREGATED" AND DESEGREGATED SETTINGS

Prepared for the Coalition for the Education of Black Children and Youth.

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To begin let me compliment the Coalition for the Education of Black Children and Youth for its endeavors and existence and express a personal gratitude for having this opportunity. At this point in time it is very difficult to find black people in a leadership capacity who still recognize the crucialness of this problem. By that I mean people who see that the answer to the education of black folk is not simply the attaining of a proportional racial mix. And because of that recognition you dare to continue to ask those more fundamental questions as to why blacks do not receive that "equal benefit" from schooling. Because the Coalition dares to raise those questions is an expression of hope for the future of black people as black people in this country. Also, even though many of our colleagues either vehemently support the NAACP's position on racial balance to the exclusion of the numerous broader questions surrounding the education of black youth or for the sake of not airing differences among blacks in public, these Colleagues are silenced. The net effect of either or both of these postures obsures the really tough issues in what might be termed a Quality equal educational opportunity. From reading the background material of the Coalition and its work over past year and a half or so, there is reason to have hope that these broader issues will be aired and forced to the forefront of the struggle for that equality of educational opportunity.

Let me also reiterate my gratitude for my being chosen to address you. Dr. Lewis contacted me on the basis of my being an "expert" in the field of black education. While I shy away from such lauds generally which suggests that anyone included myself would be the fount of knowledge on a particular subject, I am a student of the subject who is not satisfied with the trite, cliched and idealist non-sense that often passes for knowledge on this subject. There are several reasons for this dissatisfaction on my part, much of which does not have to do with my scholarly endeavors per se but aspects of my life which have shaped, guided, if you will, my scholarship. Like many, but not most, of my colleagues

I actually taught fourth grade in a ghetto school for several year . That practice has led to certain theoretical insights that only experience can provide. Also, during what was then the civil rights movement I was an activist - in fact I was trying to make the NAACP become activist. In 1967 I was a participant at the National Conference on Black Power. My activism and emotional commitment did not stop in 1967, but I cited those examples simply to point out that my view of this problem comes from a perspective that is not limited to scholarly - that is purely computerized and bookish - endeavors.

Another reason for my dissatisfaction with what I have termed that trite, cliched and idealist non-sense which passes for knowledge is that many of the models, and the assumptions implicit in those models, which should aid our understanding the problem of the education of black folk, are at best short-sighted and at worst fraudulent. By that I mean that the premises of most of the models suggested as answers to this problem assume that their scheme, their gimmick or whatever will, through education, move the masses of black people into the mainstream of American society. Let me lay whatever reputation I have or might hope to have on the line and say to you that none of these schemes (e.g. Busing, performance contracting, bilingual or bidialectal/bicultural ed, compensatory ed or giving kids candy for the correct answer) will do that. All of those models one way or another suggest that the problem rests with the client or student which is sort of an educationist/psychologist perspective rather than a more wholistic or systemic view; or as William Ryan (1968) put it, all of those models blame the victim. It is from this broader more wholistic view that I study the problem of black education. That more wholistic view is based not solely on my sociological training which takes the social structure rather than individuals as "the stuff" of its study but also, and more importantly, my view does not accept the system as being basically just with the position of blacks within that system as being simply a quirk or some minor aberration which needs only a minor adjustment and everything

will be "ok". In other words, it is my assessment only changes of the greatest magnitude will bring about justice for black people in this country with the benefits to be accured fo blacks through education as being a part of that change. Being consistent with that assessment, the challenge laid before us as students of this problem is not simply to understand the situation of black folks but to change it.

Finally by way of introduction, Dr. Lewis made it very clear to me that he was not inviting me here to "half-step" either by way of my preparedness or in terms of my candor. Even more, the real challenge was that he wanted me to identify those factors most critical to the education of black children; or in other words, prepare for you the definitive word on black education. Now, if that is not a challenge, you tell me what is? So, what follows is my humble attempt to do just that. (As an aside, the title of this talk is slightly inaccurate in that while I might endorse black children being educated in separate settings we must be intolerant of black kids being educated in <u>segregated</u> settings. I take responsibility for that error. I will explain that more later). My approach to the problem will be to discuss what we mean by quality education and try to place that in the context of the real world. To do that I take the lead provided us by such black scholars as Drs. W.E.B. DuBois (1973) and Carter G. Woodson (1933). Secondly, I will discuss those societal contradictions we face and the relationship of education to those problems. Next, and the heart of the presentation, I will suggest that education of black people is really cultural imperialism manifested in numerous ways. In this section I will attempt to be explicit about those factors I view as being most critical to the education of black children. And finally, in keeping with the dictim of not simply understanding the world but changing it I will put forth a not-so-modest proposal for change.

Before we can talk about <u>quality</u> education we must answer the question: education for what? We probably have as many answers to that question as we have

people in this room. But in order to answer that question we must have a conception, or a vision if you will, of what we want our children to become. As a matter of fact, if we do not answer that question with some degree of unanimity I am afraid that we will fall victim to an old African proverb which states: "If you don't know where you are going any road will take you there." For some, and I hope only a few, the answer might be "we just want our kids to get the same thing white kids get so that we can participate in the corruption more abundantly." While I might question the ultimate viability of such a position as it relates to the benefit of black people, the fact is that such a position is consistent with the very basic tenets of American education. As Dr. John Gardener, past secretary of Health, Education and Welfare once stated:

> (A) society such as ours, dedicated to the worth of the individual, committed to the nurture of free, rational, and responsible men and women, has special reasons for valuing education. Our deepest convictions impel us to foster individual fulfillment. (cf Baran and Sweezy, 1966, pp. 306)

On the other hand, we might want education to play a critical role in changing the quality of life for black people, generally; rather than simply the "individual fulfillment" of the select few. But in order to address what that role is about let us examine the quality of life for black people; a quality of life we want the education of black people to improve. Being from Detroit I will cite two examples related to the quality of life for black people there. I am assuming, possibly incorrectly, that similar conditions exist in large Texas cities. On the other hand, if such conditions do not presently exist maybe I am preparing you for things to come. The first example is a report from a study done by two economists at Michigan State University on unemployment in Detroit. Their findings were:

> (1) Unemployment in Detroit is of crisis proportions, as severe as it was during the Great Depression. During mid - 1975, the official rate of unemployment in the city was about 23 per cent, and in the inner city it was double this level. Rates of unemployment are even higher for blacks, women and youths. Black

> teenagers ages 16 to 19 suffer the most with an unemployment rate of about 60 percent. It is no exaggeration to say that nearly a whole generation of black youths are passing from childhood to adulthood with little prospect of secure employment. (Taylor and Peppard, 1976, p. 48).

Under such conditions we might ask the likes of Dr. Gardener: what "individual fulfillment" has schooling in Detroit provided the people who are the victims of those unemployment rates. In fact, those percentages suggest that we are talking about more than 100,000 individuals.

Turning now from those aspects of the quality of life outside school I would like to cite a description of the quality of life within school as described by the top administrator of one of the city's agencies.

> The schools in black communities often resemble red-light districts and sometimes even baby-sitting compounds more than they do centers of learning. In the halls and corridors some students are passing narcotics of various kinds to one another; others are singing and dancing to the latest top ten tunes on the "soul" charts. Straws, purchased or stolen from cafeterias, serve for the snorting or "tootin" of cocaine....
>
> Administrators, teachers and parents used to worry about the high rate of drop outs. Now the problem is the large number of drop-ins. Drop-ins are drop-outs or former graduates who return to the school, usually through an open rear door or a door unlocked by a student accomplice, in order to sell drugs, to exort money from students, to recruit potential prostitutes, to break into student lockers...to sell or purchase "hot" goods which generally come from breaking and entering neighborhood homes and/or shoplifting in downtown department stores.
>
> Regular police departments are no longer capable of handling or halting the robberies, selling of stolen goods, criminal assaults, vandalism, peddling of drugs, an pimping which has become as much a part of the normal inner city school life as classes themselves. So, in an attempt to cope with the situation, Board of Education have hired plainclothes, sometimes undercover, security force. However, under the supervision of the present administrators, the primary target of this security force has become students engaged in political activity....
>
> Under these circumstances, many parents feel as if they are sending their children off to war instead of to learn. Teachers also feel themselves surrounded

> by hostile forces; they live in fear of the communities they are supposed to be serving....
>
> Most teachers have no understanding of the historical role which education has played and continues to play in American Society. They have not the slightest notion or even concern as to the purpose which education should play at this stage of human development. Their interest in the student is like that of a canner in a cannery; their sole motivation for coming to school is their bi-weekly paychecks. For most teachers...self-indulgence (a larger and more ostentatious automobile, a more expensively furnished home, fancier clothing) is really the order of the day. (Aldridge, N.D. pp. 3-5)

While this assessment of the schools - Administrators, teachers and students - might not now be the case in Texas, the above description though painted in a rather horrible fashion, is a very definite aspect of the reality of schools in Detroit, New York, Chicago and other major cities. In addition to this description of our school we face such problems as: the recurrance of gangs; the robbery and shooting death of an 84 year white man by two youths, ages 11 and 12; numerous execution style slayings, including that of a young, attractive, black school teacher who was evidently selling drugs in the school; and people throughout the city living in fear of losing their modest possessions, or their lives.

The third and final example I use as being indicative of the quality of life for some black people is taken from a Time magazine article dated May 17, 1968. The article describes the life of Earl Perkins, a black man who chops cotton on a plantation in the Mississippi Delta:

> The most he ever earns is $3.00 for a twelve - hour day in the fields, and usually he is paid off with a fraction of his actual pay in cash (the rest probably goes to the company store). To supplement the larger, Perkins sometimes hunts rabbits, not with a gun but by skewering cottontails in their warrens with a sharp stick...Perkins, his wife and eight children pay $10 a month rent for a dilapidated "shotgun" shack, which has no indoor plumbing, electricity or gas. Perkins' life is typical of the more than 100,000 Southern blacks in the Delta whose mode of existence has changed little in 159 years (cf Greene, 1970, pp. 250-1).

Given these three examples, it seems as though the ideology which suggests that education should be for "individual fulfillment", whatever that is, is inappropriate. Consequently, when we address the question of education for what? for black people we must not be deluded into believing the 60% of unemployed youth in Detroit would, as a group, become employed if they only had that "individual fulfillment" that might be derived from a high school diploma. Also, there is not much reason to believe that such "individual fulfillment" will substantially alter the lives of the millions of Early Perkinses which exist in this country.

Facing problems of this magnitude let us now address that question of "education for what?" It seems to me that quality education must play a key role in altering those oppressive conditions cited above. In other words, our definition of a quality education is not unrelated to a quality of life that we desire. That quality of life that we desire, I would assume, strongly suggests the enhancement of the status of black people en masse. That is the education of black people must, if it is to be a quality education, must address primarily to the power, priviledge and prestige of black people in order that they may pursue life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And, since our present education is not doing that we need to understand why in order that we might alter that situation.

Education As Cultural Imperialism

In aggreement with Martin Carnoy (1974), a former colleague of mine, an economist at Stanford University, Education in this society is cultural imperialism. What do I mean by that? Well, I would assume that even though the concept of culture is often misused most of us, in a general sense, have a fairly good understanding of what that term means. On the other hand, discussions of imperialism is sort of a "no-no" in this society so I would expect our understanding of that term to be somewhat less clear. For that reason I offer the following as a definition for that term:

> The policy of extending the rule or authority of (a) ... nation over foreign countries, or acquiring and holding colonies and dependencies. (Random House, 1973)

I do not think that there is much question about the role of this country - in this, the year of the Bi Centennial - having "extented its rule" over those of us of African descent in an imperialistic fashion. But even more, that extension of rule and dependency continues to this day in the form of cultural imperialism through the system of education.

Specifically, cultural imperialism manifests itself in the schools in a number of ways:

1. Formal schooling is a function of the economic and social hierachy of the society and cannot be separated from it.

2. As a result of the above, schools function to reinforce the social relations of production.

3. Related to that, the fact that schools for blacks and other poor are often prison-like and oppressive and that such schools teach these children in ways which have little to do with their reality and are irrelevant to their interests is a function of the above mentioned social relations of production.

4. Because of the relationship of schools to production relations in the larger society, mass schooling was instituted primarily as a means of organizing "uncultured" workers to support the capitalist system by accepting their roles in it. In other words, a primary purpose of the school is to inculcate in the workers, blacks and other poor the idea that the system is legitimate (i.e. just, right).

5. Related to the above functions the schools serve to allocate people to social roles in that heirarchy.

6. Last, but most importantly, the control of schooling rests in the hands of those at the top of that social heirarchy or their agents for the very purpose of maintaing that heirarchy and ensuring to the best of their ability that this cultural imperialism will be fulfilled. (Carnoy, 1974).

Given these general characteristics of education as cultural imperialism and using that framework as a tool for understanding the education of black youth, we might now attempt to analyze the situation of black children in the Texas schools. Not being from Texas and having no first hand experience relative to how these schools serve black kids it is necessary for me to generalize from other settings and assume the comments fit. However, one bit of information that I do have is that, unless drastic change has taken place since 1971, blacks in the state of Texas score about 8 points* lower on the ACT than do whites and about a point and a half below Mexican Americans. Further, as we view those test scores according to socioeconomic status we find that even those blacks of the highest SES score below white of the lowest SES. Now before we jump to any conclusions about these scores reflecting genetic deficiencies as might such racists as Shockley and Jensen, the fact is that some blacks did score in the highest range of the scores; and at the same time about 30% of the whites scored in the lowest range of the scores. Now unless Shockley is going to claim that that 30% has a substantial amount of black blood we can dismiss that hereditability argument right now.

Another way of viewing those scores might be to look carefully at the socio-economic status of the whites and then attempt to see if that provides any clues to our understanding the scores of the blacks. While the scores of both whites and Mexican-American tended to drop between 1967 and 1971, the scores of blacks over that period rather consistently, though not substantially, climbed for each SES category. There might be numerous explanations for such an occurence but two possibly explanations stand out in my mind: 1) during the late 60's and early 70's there was a tremendous shift in the consciousness of black youth, and 2) though not significantly in a relative sense, there continues to be a shift of the black

*ACT mean composite standard scores; data source provided by the Urban Studies Center, Trenty University.

population from the rural to urban areas which means that in a absolute sense there is a slight rise in opportunity. Now I have not actually tested either of these notions as they occured in Texas nor have I tested the relationship of consciousness to achievement. But I have found consciousness to be associated with assertiveness of black youth. (Newby, 1974)

But more importantly, even though the present tests are the only indicators we have, presently, to test academic achievement, we might take pause to understand what those tests are all about. In doing that we, might raise questions such as: what was the genesis of testing?; what was/is the purpose of testing?; Do the tests reflect what the students know? The answers to these questions might help us place in some perspective the scores of black youth relative to whites and others. Also, the answers to these questions should suggest a more profitable use of such tests.

The Role of Testing in Cultural Imperialism

As to the genesis of testing, we need only to look at who the persons were in the forefront of the testing movement and what were they about - what were their values? Both Kamin (1974) in his "The Politics of IQ" and Clarence Karier (1970) have well demonstrated that the leaders of the testing movement - Thorndike, Terman, Yerkes among others - were great believers in Eugenics. What, some of you might ask, is Eugenics? It pretended to be a science of human breeding; the careful selection of parents in an effort to improve the human race. Consequently, these grants in the field of psychology, and testing particularly, were about the business of sterilization for southeastern Europeans, Mexicans and blacks. Further, as Karier shows the whole testing movement, which was financed by corporate money, functioned to legitimize the corporate state. That is, the very construction of these tests was to show that the more wealthy one was the more intelligent he was. Also, intelligence was related to one's morality. (Are we to assume that Rep. Wayne

Hayes is just dumb?) Put in still, another way, it was the purpose of testing to legitimize the social class structure, or the social relations of production. The following quote from Terman is of this purpose:

> Preliminary investigations indicate that an IQ below 70 rarely permits anything better than unskilled labor; that range from 70 to 80 is preeminently that of semi-skilled labor, from 80 to 100 that of the skilled or ordinary clerical labor, from 100 to 110 or 115 that of the semi-professional pursuits; and that about all these are the grades of intelligence which permit one to enter the professions or the larger field of business. Intelligence tests can tell us whether a child's native brightness corresponds more nearly to the median of (1) the professional classes, (2) those in the semi-professional pursuits, (3) ordinary skilled workers, (4) semi-skilled workers, or (5) unskilled laborers. This information will be of great value in planning the education of a particular child and also in planning the differentiated curriculum here recommended (1923, pp. 27-8).

Can there be any doubt as to what the purpose of that testing movement was all about. Now, I know the scores I was alluding to earlier were so-called achievement scores not IQ tests. But let's be sure about one thing: there are more similarities than differences in those tests. Additionally, we might include personality tests in this discussion. The same people make up all these tests.

Related to this second point and to answer the last question "Do the tests reflect what the students know?", we might raise two other questions which require investigation; did the schools for either blacks or whites, but particularly for blacks, teach what was being tested: 1) If so, how did the people at American College Testing in Ames, Iowa know what was being taught in Texas?; 2) for our future reference, and I think this question requires some serious reflection, should the schools be teaching black kids what was being tested? By that I do not mean that we should consider whether or not we should teach the test - although in many white schools (I hear) that that is precisely what is done. No! I am raising the question as to whether the content of those tests are the most relevant things black kids should be about? While I have been tabbed "the expert" I do not have

the answer to that question, but it should receive some serious consideration.

Two last points before moving on to another aspect of how the schools promote cultural imperialism. One, while we should be skeptical of how accurately those tests actually reflect what blacks are learning in schools it is entirely possible - and likely given the state of black education nationwide - that those tests do reflect the sorry state of black education in Texas. The other point I want to make is a rather curious little thing for those people who think that there is a fragment of truth to the Jensen - Shockley argument. A well-designed study by Christopher Bagley (1975) which was done in England found that the more "white" blood an African had the lower they were likely to score on the Stanford Binet.

There is one other aspect as to the role of testing in promoting education as cultural imperialism which I will return to later.

The Teaching of Reading in Cultural Imperialism

As a follow up to the learning content in the education of black youth we might discuss several facets of the curriculum. No doubt one of the biggest problems blacks have with those tests previously discussed is the problem of vocabulary which is also related to reading. While I am not a psychologist and cannot make definitive claims about the very complex issues involved in cognition, and with that reservation in mind, I would like to comment on the issue of reading. A deputy superintendent of the New York City schools wrote:

> Reading facility is a kind of quintessence, a distillate produced by the communication process. The search for the almost magic formula for sucess in reading must, therefore, go beyond the crucibles of the resultant broth deep into the cauldrons of the language potions and ingredients from which it springs. Failure to find such a reading formula can mean only continued degradation and despair now and in the future for the countless thousands of children who pass through our schools despite the most valiant and heroic efforts of the architects of anti-poverty and other such well-intentioned programs. (King, 1966)

In other words, to teach reading to "those countless thousands" who pass through the school house doors requires not only "valiant and heroic" efforts but also a "magic formula." As my fourteen year old would say - that's heavy! It is not only heavy, it is incredible. It is particularly incredible when one is presented such facts as the following:

1) During the voter registration campaigns in those states where literacy tests were required, SNCC workers, college kids, with no training in reading taught people to read sufficiently enough to pass those literacy tests.

2) In one year, by using high school students, Cuba taught tens of thousands of illiterate farmers to read.

3) In 1949, China with a population of over 800 million, only 17% of that population was literate. Now, some 25 years later 90% of the population is literate.

I wonder what would be the New York superintendent's response to these facts?

Further, while I think he overstates the case, I tend to agree with Neil Postman who states that:

> Teachers of reading comprise a most sinister political group, whose continued presence and strength are more cause for alarm than celebration (Postman, 1972).

Why political? Because, he says, "to teach reading, or even to promote vigorously the teaching of reading, is to take a definite political position on how people should behave." Also, since most of these same teachers who feel reading is so important would be opposed to using books which allowed kids to read something that:

> Described the growth of American Civilization as being characterized by four developments: 1) insurrection against a legally constituted government, in order to achieve a political identity; 2) genocide against the indigenous population in order to get land; 3) keeping human beings as slaves, in order or achieve an economic base; and 4) the importation of "coolie" labor, in order to build the railroads (Postman, 1972, p. 54).

Also, that quote which the reading teachers would probably refuse to teach might be the very curriculum content that black kids would feel was honest enough to be worth their time.

More importantly, though, the real politics of reading teachers and the schools is the fact that at every level, from pre-school to graduation, they determine for everyone's edification that literacy is equated with intelligence. "If that were true," he states, "reading teachers would be the smartest people around." But the crux of the problem is that children who do not read well are considered to be stupid. Even more it is precisely this notion which keeps blacks and the poor "in their place." And in so doing, the realities of cultural imperialism continues.

Teacher Expectations and the Allocation of Social Roles

Reading teachers as well as other teachers not only perceive certain kids to be stupid, they act on that perception through their expectations of students' performance. I should say, that while I am certain, and there is substantial research to support my claims relative to teacher expectation, I started not to mention this aspect of the teaching-learning process because it has been so over-worked. Also, having been a teacher I simply do not like the idea that people - researchers, parents, administrators, etc - are always "dumping" on teachers. Finally, I do not mean this in a negative sense, the question has been raised as to whether the teacher is really important in the total scheme of things? I will explain this point later on. But since I have started I might as well be specific about those ways in which teachers make a negative contribution to the education of blacks. Coleman (1966) found a rather strong positive association between "Teacher's Verbal Ability" and student achievement. In other words, teachers with more elaborate vocabularies were more likely to be teaching kids whose tests scores were high. Does this mean that smarter teachers produce smarter kids? From his data we can not make such a statement. What that might say (particularly since he

does not know what that "Teacher's Verbal Ability" is a proxy for) is that the more middle class teachers are more likely to be teaching suburban kids. And if those teachers are in suburbia because they do not want to teach black or poor kids, suburbia is exactly where I want them to be - not in the black community, regardless of their knowledge of the English language.

If these teachers with their extensive vocabularies are teaching kids they view negatively and do not expect them to know much there is little chance for the teacher-student interaction to have a positive outcome. The research tends to show that teachers who view kids positively give them positive reinforcement. So, the question becomes how do these expectations come into play, become operationalized. One example is provided by the research of Judith Guskin (1968). She presented separate groups of teachers with a tape recording of a middle-class white child and a low-income black child. Each group was asked to write a series of questions about what they had heard. While the words of the two children were exactly the same, the teachers assessed the two children very differently. The black child was thought to be less intelligent, to score lower on achievement tests, to be likely to drop-out of school and to have come from a so-called culturally deprived background. More than simply viewing black children paternalistically as many of these teachers did, I wonder what the teacher-student interaction is like in the following ca

> In 1963, the commissioner of Education of the State of New York declared that was state policy to eliminate racial imbalance in all state schools.... On the day the declaration was published, staff members in a large high school were discussing the announcement; it was evident that these teachers opposed (desegregation). One declared that he would move to the suburbs if the commissioner ever tried to force his children to go to school with (blacks). Another said: "He ought to have to teach some of the little bastards." (Wayson, 1975)

In addition to my query about the nature the teacher-student interaction in such cases, taking the lead from Coleman what difference would the vocabularies of these teachers matter as it relates to student achievement?

What difference do these attitudes make? In the classroom they are operationalized in such a way that children are given negative feedback. Consequently, learning becomes antithetical to what school is about for them. For example, in comparing several classrooms Eleanor Leacock (1969) found that middle-class particularly white children were bing socialized for achievement, self direction and leadership while lower class children were being drilled in obedience, reading and arithmetic to the exclusion of science and social studies. In a rather consistent finding also (Leacock, 1968; Rist, 1970) is that teachers of lower class children tend to dislike bright students in such a setting. In fact, they tend to be overly critical of such students while admiring students with lesser ability as long as they are quiet.

In sum, through not only their verbal interaction, teachers holding such views of lower status students organize their class along perceived social class lines and reward a punishish students in accord with <u>their</u> expectations. In fact, teachers through ability grouping and cumlative records stigmatize children and initiate the "appropriate" tracks for children. Consequently, the participation of teachers in cultural imperialism is congruent with the rest of the system. Their actions allocate kids to their future work roles.

<u>Racial Balance As Cultural Imperialism</u>

Usually around the issue of desegregation, another issue is raised having to do with the aspirations of black youth. It was assumed that blacks would strive toward greater achievement if they attended desegregated schools. In such schools it was believed that the reference group for blacks would be their achievement-oriented white peers. I would assume, that such an assumption was based upon that research which suggested that blacks had this urgent desire to be whites (cf Kardiner & Ovessey, 1951). At any rate, Wilson (1959) found that the aspiration level of blacks tended to be higher in "segregated" settings--that is correct, blacks in "segregated" settings-according to his study-tended to have higher aspirational levels than blacks in desegregated schools. An excellent example of this was found by Ogbu (1974) in his

study of the Stockton, (Calif.) district. He showed that black kids judge themselves and their progress in relationship to other black kids. So, instead of maximizing on this black peer relationship we get busing for racial balance the very epitome of cultural imperialism.

Several years ago Stokeley Carmichael and Dr. Charles Hamilton asserted:

> "Integration" as a goal...speaks to the problem of blackness not only in an unrealistic way but also in a despicable way. It is based on complete acceptance of the fact that in order to have a decent house or education, black people must move into a white neighborhood or send their children to a white school. This reinforces among both black and white, the idea that "white is automatically superior and "black" by definition inferior. For this reason, "integration" is a subterfuge for the maintenance of white supremacy.[1]

The logic or truth content of their assertion would seem to be self-evident. Yet, the NAACP and the courts continue to advocate and rule, respectively, that the school be "integrated." Since the NAACP, and we might assume the courts, favor justice for Afro-Americans, the question becomes how do we reconcile the Carmichael-Hamilton assertion with the continuing press for "integrated" schools? The problem is not a simple one, yet we must bring some clarity to the paradox.

Compounding this problem is the fact that large segments of the white population beguiled by their racism, resist efforts to desegregate. The importance of this side of the coin is that blacks and whites who are anti-racist find themselves, by opposing the Louise Day Hicks, and the George Wallaces, supporting a cause which in itself denies equity to black children and supports white supremacy. Put another way, by simply favoring whatever the racist oppose, forces the progressive people in this country into a liberal position which is not only paternalistic but itself anti-black. By anti-black I refer back to the Carmichael-Hamilton assertion that "integration" is a subterfuge for white supremacy. How could this be?

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[1] Carmichael and Hamilton, Black Power: The Politics of Liberation, Random House, 1967, pg.54.

No doubt the most important governmental act on behalf of Afro-Americans in this century was the 1954 Supreme Court decision. The decision essentially stripped away the legal sanction of subordinate status for black people. That is, prior to May 17, 1954 it was constitutional for black people to be relegated to any place and anything whites deemed appropriate under the guise of "separate but equal." The overturning of such "white liberty" ennanced the status of black people as citizens--that is, so-called second-class citizenship was no longer the law of the land. Consequently, we might conclude, as did Lerone Bennett in his Before the Mayflower, that the '54 decision ushered in a new epoch.

On the other hand, the court was not saying and should not have been interpreted as saying as is often done, that whenever blacks are separated from whites they (blacks) are likely to suffer psychological damage. If that were so, well over 95% of Afro-Americans would be in trouble just being at home! Such a contention would be absurb--illogical.

At the time of Brown and for years subsequent to Brown, the major concern was equality of educational opportunity but at this point in our history the issue has become racial balance to the exclusion of all other concerns. The social science evidence which shows that few, if any, benefits are derived for either black or white children as a result of desegregation is ignored or denounced. The issue for the racial balance advocates has been the mixing of bodies such that blacks are always in a minority rather than an improved education for blacks. In fact the concern raised by James Coleman which suggested that desegregation leads to "white flight" is a concern for, to the the degree possible, keeping the white majority in the cities, not quality education. Essentially, what that means is that black children are placed in the vulnerable position of being subordinated in numberous ways:

1. Classroom teachers & white students often regard them as interlopers.

Which results in:

2. Blacks being disciplined (i.e. suspended, excluded, etc.) at a rate that far exceeds the proportion in the school.

3. Minimizes their opportunity for equal participation in school affairs.

4. Most importantly, retards their academic achievement.

The non-Southern school district which has served as the racial balance model-Berkeley, California, - is now reporting after eight years of two-way busing that there is an increasing desparity between white and non-white achievement. According to the reports from Berkeley this desparity leads to separation in the classroom and on the playground. One could agrue that this increasing disparity has little to do with separation or integration but racism and class bias in the very fabric of schools; in short, cultural imperialism.

While the right of black children to a non-segregated, non-discriminatory education must be defended and fought for, the evidence continues to mount that "integration" (as presently conceived and practiced), is a subterfuge for white supremacy. And further this emphasis on race clouds the nature of the exploitation of both blacks and whites.

The critical link to my argument that schooling is primarily cultural imperialism is to show that schooling is a function of imperialism. In other words, that such schooling not only serves the interests the top of the socio-economic hierarchy but is controlled by them. Immediately, I know that there are those among you who can think of numerous local school board members who are certainly not in the ruling class. Also, I am certain that in most instances the man who actually runs the show is the superintendent who definitely is not <u>in</u> the ruling class. Given this notion of local control, am I just being irresponsible to make such an assertion? I think not.

At the lowest level of this system of control we find the schoolboard members. Who are they? In his book <u>Who Run Our Schools?</u> Neal Gross found that a significant number, though a minority, of people who run for the schoolboard do it for the experience of running for political office. Since it is their intention to move

up in the political structure we might assume a commitment to the political process. While that might seem obvious and trival I think it tells us something about their commitment to the preservation of the status quo. Another study has shown that well over 75% are businessmen and professionals rather than workers or blacks for that matter. But even more telling, particularly as it relates to the proper education of blacks, Neal Gross asked superintendents and schoolboard members the following question: "Do you feel it is desirable or undesirable for the public school to teach the superiority of the American way of life in all things?" His findings were: 73% of the schoolboard members and 61% of the superintendents responded that such a practice is "desirable." Gross concluded the obvious, "a majority of superintendents and schoolboard members favor an ethnocentric bias in the classroom." Is there any question where they must stand on oroviding that curriculum content which is essential for blacks as an aid for our understanding our oppression in relationship to this society. So, while those in local control might not be in the highest stratum of the socio-economic hierarchy, they clearly represent their views. Also, does this not suggest rather clearly what is expected--by that I mean the bases for the rewards and sanctions of teachers? This latter point is related to an issue raised earlier. Are teachers important? Knowing the institutionalized ways in which teachers are "governed" suggests that the problem is bigger than teachers themselves. Does this governance system not suggest rather clearly what the nature of the curriculum will be? Does this not suggest which students will be, on command, provide the appropriate skills to function in this society? To emphasize this point I use one more example:

> The State Board in a Midwestern state was holding public hearings prior to enacting a ruling to require schools to keep students in classes for six hours a day. Though it was unstated, much of the impetus for the ruling had come from a fear of having black adolescents 'on the street.' "Most of us at this table are employers and we want the schools to produce employees who will do who will do what employers want them to do." (cf Wayson, 1975).

Need anymore be said?

But more important than the local boards and superintendents, the most powerful in this country do control education. You should recall how testing was developed, promoted and institutionalized by corporate money. Further, that institutionalized testing industry undergirds the very structure of our school in both its status structure and curriculum content. One other not unrelated point, the most powerful in this country also serve on and control those Board of Trustees or Regents for those institutions where adminstrators - the gatekeepers of the schools - and teachers are trained. So, while it may appear that we have local control, where the buck stops - and I mean both money and power - is not us in the hands of the hands of the people.

Where does this leave us? I began by citing some real world examples of our oppression. DuBois and Woodson in thinking and writing on the subject of the education of black folk suggested that we should be educating children in an effort to relieve this oppression. They suggest that our problem is not simply the level of education but the kind of education, as well. They both suggest that we need to have a vision that is based upon a knowledge of the world and what our place can be in that world. This knowledge will cause us to rely on struggle rather than wishes. For example DuBois would ask of this group: Is our goal to train a few black doctors so that they can make $400,000 a year from illness or should we train numerous doctors whose orinary occupation will be to prevent illness? He suggested in no uncertain terms that our task was not simply to move into the mainstream (as television would have us believe we have already done) but to change the course of the stream. I am suggesting that only when this is done can we expect anything that resembles equal educational opportunity.

What can be done? Here entails my not-so-modest proposal. We must recognize that only when the control of education is in the hands of those people who are now oporessed can we expect justice. But in the mean time we must struggle against all of those manifestations of cultural imperialism. By that I mean struggle

to stop testing in your district, struggle to stop teacher tracking, and struggle for a curriculum that leads to a fuller understanding of oppression. And as a result of this understanding we must struggle to fundementally change the present social relation of production which schools reflect.

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